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CITIZENS, TECHNOLOGY AND THE NPM MOVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

In the modernisation of the state, NPM ideas are presumed to offer Governments certainty in the face of major unknowns. The reliance of NPM on information technologies is presented by Governments as underlining this potential for certainty. However, this presumption of certainty is elusive in practice. Government pursuit of NPM transformational policies aims to make efficiency savings and cost reductions, but this may create new uncertainties for citizens, particularly because of the unintended consequences of the implementation of new technology.

KEYWORDS: Citizens; NPM; Technology; Transformation; Identity and Power

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CITIZENS, TECHNOLOGY AND THE NPM MOVEMENT

1.INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the impact of technology on citizens in a contemporary society which remains preoccupied with New Public Management (NPM) ideas (Hyndman and Lapsley, 2016), almost four decades after the NPM phenomenon was first observed from the early 1980s by Hood (1991). The attraction of the NPM ideas is their apparent ability to offer politicians powerful solutions to complex, even wicked, public policy problems (Pollitt, 2007, 2016). In this way NPM purports to offer certainty to politicians on how best to handle policy problems. The NPM proposals of marketisation and calculative practice have made its adoption the natural order for governments across the world. The contribution of this paper is its elaboration of the tensions and contradictions around the apparent certainty of NPM policy outcomes as it impacts on citizens. The NPM literature and policy documents advance particular ideas with significant consequences for citizens, without elaborating on how the apparent certainty of NPM creates a world of uncertainty for citizens. This paper mobilises ideas of identity and the Foucauldian perspective on power to scrutinise the capacity of NPM ideas which, when aligned with new information technologies, make the everyday existence of ordinary citizens more complex and uncertain.

The discussion in this paper is organised in the following sections. Next, there is a brief discussion of identity as a concept and of the Foucauldian model of power in contemporary society. The third section examines the nature of the NPM and the implications of the centrality of IT in NPM thinking for government and policy makers. Then this study explores the outcome of NPM reforms for the everyday existence of the citizen in the contemporary world. Finally, the paper makes recommendations for public managers, policy makers and researchers.

2.CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVE: IDENTITY, DISCIPLINE AND CONTROL

The complexity of social phenomena requires more than one theoretical lens to explore and understand and explain their implications (Jacobs, 2012; 2016). This advocacy of theoretical pluralism (Lowe et al, 2012) is particularly pertinent to the focus of this study. In this paper, we draw on the concept of identity and on Foucauldian ideas of discipline and control. The idea of identity is particularly apposite in understanding the expectations of the citizen in an NPM world in which multiple identities prevail. The concept of identity is a fundamental part of the social sciences. In the seminal work by Berger and Luckmann (1971, p.194), identity is defined as follows:

“Identity is formed by social processes. Once crystallised, it is maintained, modified or even reshaped by social relations. The social processes involved in both the formation and the maintenance of identity are determined by the social structure. Conversely, the identities produced by the interplay of organism, individual consciousness and social structure react upon the given social structure, maintaining it, modifying it, or even reshaping it”.

Therefore, identity is far-reaching, being shaped by and reshaping its social context.

This paper is also informed by Foucault's ideas of discipline and control. Foucault's model of power relations reveals how individuals in society are disciplined and controlled (Foucault, 1979). In his elaboration of power relations, Foucault has three inter-related systems which transform individuals into subjects (1) quasi-scientific knowledge (2) discursive practices and (3) power effects.

Regarding, (1), quasi –scientific knowledge, this represents the nature of expertise and ideas, themes, and general concepts which emerge and are articulated in society. Dimension (2) discursive practices, refers to the transmission of the information content of knowledge systems. Foucault's dimension (3) on power effects refers to the outcome in which there is subjectification of individuals in society as obedient, docile.

An important part of the Foucauldian perspective is the way both expertise and ideas and discursive practices are enacted. These may intermingle and not follow a sequential process. They have no "invariant" universal properties, but are fluid and subject to a continuous chain of ever-newer interpretations (McIntosh, 2002). This turbulence of power relations has a particular outcome, in which discipline in society is achieved by surveillance. This has important implications in an NPM world in which information technology is prominent as a tool of government. The distinctive nature of this surveillance is its ability to induce individuals to regulate their own behaviour in the light of its assumed visibility to others (Layder, 2006).

3. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN AN NPM WORLD

The NPM is a movement. There are a range of actors within this movement: NPM commentators, proponents, kindred spirits and fellow travellers. The NPM movement is receptive to private sector management ideas from a variety of sources and vintages. This includes ideas of McDonaldisation (Ritzer, 1983), of Reinvention (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992) and of Lean Systems (Womack & Jones, 1996). Most recently for example, Toyota's lean management ideas from the 1960s have become widespread in public services as a means of achieving more with less in a world of austerity (McCann et al, 2015). In Foucauldian terms, the dominant discourses of NPM are around private sector mimicry.

The NPM movement has a set of ideas – marketisation, results focus, calculative practice and private sector mimicry – all of which has made it a resilient species in public management thinking (Pollitt, 2007). The NPM has been depicted as a kind of multiplying machine (Brunsson et al, 1998). It is said to spread like a virus through public services (Hyndman and Lapsley, 2016). While the apparent certainty NPM offers to policymakers and public managers in an uncertain world may prove to be elusive and even to disappoint these self -same policy makers (Lapsley, 2009), it exerts a powerful attraction as a policy option in addressing the need for public service reforms, particularly in an era of austerity. Indeed, it has been suggested that NPM has become an embedded recurring phenomenon in contemporary society (Lapsley, 2008) which has been intensified by the great recession since 2008 (Hodges and Lapsley, 2016).

The ideas and practice of NPM constitute a transforming agenda. They are a means to make public services more like the private sector and to fundamentally change the citizen experience of public services. Since the prevalence of NPM ideas and practices were first observed by Hood (1991, 1995) there have been numerous suggestions that the era of NPM is over and that we are now experiencing an NPM world. One significant contribution to the literature which challenges the pre-eminence of NPM is the articles by Dunleavy et al (2006) Margetts and Dunleavy (2013) in which they argue that E-Government has created a post NPM world which enhances citizen problem-solving capacity. However, this study ignores the observation by Hood (1991) that the development of automation, particularly in information technology, was a fundamental aspect of NPM. Other commentators on public management have observed the significance of information technology as being mobilised to enable NPM practices (Lapsley, 2009). Indeed, there are many government publications which place information technology at the centre of their efforts to reform public services. An overview of NPM progression and IT enabling of modernisation of public services management is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 NPM & Technology

Policy Sequence	Key Policy Document	NPM Emphasis	IT Emphasis
Cabinet Office (1999)	Modernising Government.	Introduced ideas of joined up government and crosscutting as key dimensions of public services management reform, with key approach of Best Value.	Highlighted the application of new technology as a key addition to modernisation
Cabinet Office (2005),	Transformational Government: Enabled by Technology	A shared services approach to more efficient and effective public services delivery enabled by IT developments	The Transformational Government strategy emphasises that IT-enabled services need to be designed around the citizen or business, not the provider
Cabinet Office (2006).	Prime Minister's Strategy Unit. The Government's Approach to Public Service Reform	The importance of performance management competition and contestability in service provision	More effective use of information technology to design services around the needs of users
UK Government (2009)	Working Together: Public Services on Your Side	Importance of target setting and performance management. Identified need for citizens empowerment and localisation of services	Stressed the importance of IT innovation as enablers of effective public services
Cabinet Office (2017).	Government Transformation Strategy.	Advocates digital working as key to enhancing citizens life experiences, improving delivery of public services	Digital revolution achieves prominence in this policy document

Most recently, the Government Transformation Strategy by the UK government recently stated that “the imperative is to change, therefore - and to do so at pace and at scale. It is in essence a change of working, of culture and of disposition - changes that are made possible by digital technology” (Cabinet Office, 2017). This 2017 Government Transformation Strategy (Cabinet Office, 2017) confirmed and furthered the imperative to adopt information and digital technologies as enablers of change in public services. This document stresses the citizens’ role as the beneficiaries of this change: “In a world where people rightly expect the government to deliver public services effectively and at speed, that makes the challenge more daunting still. The imperative is to change, therefore - and to do so at pace and at scale. This is the meaning of transformation. It is, in essence, a change of working, of culture and of disposition - changes that are made possible by digital technology” (Cabinet Office, 2017). As such, this embedding of NPM ideas within public services places a central focus on the role of the citizen in the NPM world.

4.NPM & THE DUAL IDENTITIES OF CITIZENS

In this section, we show how the concept of the citizen has evolved after nearly four decades of NPM. Table 2 sets out the key dimensions of this analysis. In this discussion, we distinguish between two facets of the contemporary citizen: 1-Citizens as suspects 2-Citizens as consumers. These constructs reveal the dual identities of the contemporary citizen, which have been shaped primarily by NPM ideas but often by technology as well.

Table 2. The Dual Identities of the Citizen in an NPM World

Identities	NPM Influence	IT Influence	Citizens Role	Outcome
Citizen as Suspect	Important	Instrumental	Passive	Unintended
Citizen as Consumer	Essential	Uneven	Active	Intended

However, the acknowledgement of the importance of efficient and effective public services and of the role of IT in enabling this does not necessarily resolve the challenges facing policy makers. The quintessential NPM idea of the citizen as a consumer is shown to be problematic. The adoption of IT has many potential benefits for citizens but its wholesale adoption by governments and related agencies may create a surveillance society. These issues are explored below.

1. Citizens as Consumers

The NPM seeks to reconstruct citizens as consumers (Shareef et al., 2016). This is intended to place the citizen at the centre of calculative practice, as they make trade-offs on the policy options before them. There is an essential contradiction with this construct as NPM pursues customer satisfaction rather than citizen participation (Doughty, 2015) and governments are judged according to their success in mimicking the business model of for-profit corporations

(Doughty, 2015; Boyne, 2013; Walker et al., 2011). Indeed, treating citizens as consumers is the cause of failure of many NPM initiatives (Nguyen, 2014).

First, we analyse the citizen as consumer in the NHS. There have been a series of attempts to marketise the NHS, but subsequent developments have not learned from the UK's *experimentum crucis* - the Internal Market in health care. We examine this experience and the continuing focus on markets. There are certain general issues which occurred within the internal market initiative. This included high transaction costs in contract specification exacerbated by (1) serious uncertainties over the cause and effect of particular treatments and (2) the unpredictable nature of non-elective care. This was made worse by bounded rationality – the sheer scale of the number of contracts on a cost per case basis. This market also resulted in scope for opportunistic behaviour e.g. promotion of unnecessarily high cost services. The market was created by establishing a purchaser/provider split. Both sides of this split had deleterious features. For the purchasers, there was evidence of adverse selection, in which GPs expressed preference for younger, fitter, less costly patients. There was a two-tier Service, in which GPs with budgets got better, faster services for their patients. These issues were accentuated by incomplete information and bounded rationality on GP budget setting. In the Provider side of the split, there were examples of asset specificity, bilateral (or quasi-bilateral) exchange relationships with certain hospitals (e.g. spatial monopoly / specialised services). Providers also needed precisely costed information, but information systems were unable to deliver. Furthermore, there was evidence of opportunistic behaviour in contract setting. For a more elaborate account of these issues see Lapsley (1993).

The internal ('quasi') market in health care ceased to exist when a Labour administration was elected to office in 1997. However, since then, aspects of the internal market have returned in England (e.g. national tariffs, Primary Care Trusts as purchasers of services) which were introduced by New Labour and subsequently by the Coalition Government of 2010. The central concept of the citizen as consumer was expressed as patient choice and contestability (Department of Health, 2006). The New Labour approach identified the rise of a consumer culture in society (Clarke, 2007). These various initiatives demonstrate the problematic nature of the concept of the citizen as a consumer. There has been a particular focus on the application of this concept in health and social care. This has proved a major challenge for IT transformation and NHS IT initiatives such as Connecting for Health have failed to deliver (Waterson, 2014). Also, the core activities of health care are complex and specialist expertise is necessary to exercise informed judgements. This has applied across the political spectrum (Appleby, 2004).

The intended effect of these reforms is to place the citizen at the nexus of a calculative practice which they may not be capable of undertaking. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the fragmented nature of the consumers of public services (Laing et al, 2009). A distinct outcome which attenuates the concept of the citizen as consumer is the introduction of proxies for citizens as consumers, whether health care professional groups, managers, or quangos. The original internal market of 1991 had GP fund holders as proxies for patients as consumers. The New Labour NHS introduced Primary Care Trusts to assume the purchasing role of GP fund holders. The Coalition Government of 2010 introduced an NHS Commissioning Board, with groups of GPs forming commissioning consortia to purchase services (DoH, 2010). These proposals have failed to elaborate policies which enact the citizen as consumer. It has been suggested (Black, 2010) that these reforms are merely a power shift from one group of

providers (secondary care) to another (primary care). These reforms have introduced risks and uncertainties for the providers and purchasers of health care services and for patients (Klein, 2013). One particular feature of this disconnection is the limited appetite on the part of both citizens and GPs for engagement with radical market reform in the NHS (Asthana, 2011). The complexity of the citizen as consumer is accentuated by being confronted with issues of entitlement, rationing and of opportunity cost, with limited expertise and the disjunctures between the power of citizens vis-à-vis government agencies (Clarke, 2007). These complexities of the citizen as consumer have been exacerbated by the failure of ambitious plans for transformational IT service in the Connecting for Health programme within the NHS (Cabinet Office, 2011; Robertson et al, 2011).

2.Citizens as Suspects

The reliance on information technology by governments raises the issue of whether this is a manifestation of a surveillance society. The reliance on tools such as a national identity register, a national DNA database, interception of online communications and the proliferation of surveillance cameras are all indicative of a surveillance society. The citizen is a suspect. A Foucauldian perspective would see these uses of technology as a natural progression in the control of citizens (see, e.g. McIntosh ,2002).

In this section we examine the way technology has recreated one strand of the contemporary citizen's identity as a suspect by (1) the introduction of policies to intercept citizen communications and (2) by the proliferation of CCTV cameras, both public and private but in public space.

(1) Government Proposals for Intercept Modernisation

There is a concern that a surveillance society exists in which data on citizens is routinely collected by government in a manner which impinges on the personal privacy of UK citizens (Muir, 2015). This has been described in the media as the Snooper's Charter. The UK Coalition Government of 2010-2015 initially proposed legislation to ensure:

'all (communications) data that public authorities might need, including third party data, is collected and retained by communications service providers; and that the retained data is further processed by communications service providers enabling specific requests to be processed quickly and comprehensively' (Home Office, 2009)

In this proposal, communications data referred to telephone numbers dialled, websites visited, addresses to which emails sent. This was opposed by the UK Information Commissioner on the grounds of privacy (Travis, 2010). This proposal was blocked by the LibDem part of the Coalition Government.

With the election of a Conservative Government with an outright majority in 2015, the then Home Secretary, Teresa May, resumed the Home Office plans for an intercept bill. This proposal was described by Home Secretary May as vital for public safety (O'Neill, 2014). In introducing the draft Investigatory Powers Bill to Parliament, May admitted that the intelligence services had secretly been collecting data on citizens for years (O'Neill, 2015). The European Court of Human Justice has ruled that the general and indiscriminate retention of emails and electronic communications is illegal (Bowcott, 2016).

In defense of the current legislation, the UK Government has commented that:

“We improve trust between citizens and state, giving citizens confidence that their personal data is secure and being used in ways they expect, while making government activity more transparent and making publicly-owned, non-personal data available for reuse where appropriate” (Cabinet Office, 2017).

These policies confirm the continuation of a surveillance society.

(2) CCTV Surveillance

Ordinary citizens and consumers are increasingly aware that they are under surveillance in everyday life (Doyle et al., 2013). Although people are aware that video surveillance is deployed for the sake of security, privacy protection and respect are perceived as an issue (Martínez-Ballesté et al., 2017). Furthermore, some studies stress the “dark side” of surveillance cameras, as their potential to affect or distort human behaviour and to unnecessarily interfere with private lives (van der Sar et al., 2011; Sheldon et al., 2011). Surveillance cameras are widely deployed in commercial and public places to improve security against illegal or damaging activities (e.g. terroristic attacks). It follows that there is a need to ensure the originality and authenticity of videos as well as to extract intelligent information from massive image streams to build stronger security systems (Sivarathinabala et al., 2017). On the other hand, surveillance cameras have also been explored as a potential tool to democratize surveillance (Schuck, 2015). As stated by Sandhu and Haggerty (2015; 1) “this loosely coordinated camera infrastructure is part of the broader transformation of policing from a historically “low visibility” to an increasingly ‘high visibility’ occupation”.

On available evidence, the functionality of CCTV cameras cannot be deemed a success. It has cost a lot of money and not produced anticipated benefits (Gill and Spriggs, 2005, p.120). The use of CCTV cameras in city, town centres and housing estates does not have a significant effect on crime (Farrington and Welsh, 2008). The extensive use of speed and road safety cameras in the UK has resulted in both (1) a significant reduction in car speeds and (2) a significant reduction in casualties *at camera sites* (PA Consulting for the Department of Transport; Gains et al., 2005). Similarly, a report by the London Metropolitan Police (Metropolitan Police (2009), Internal Report, (FOI) Hope, 2009) reported that, of more than 1 million CCTV cameras in London, the CCTV Footage was used to solve less than one crime for every 1000 cameras.

It has been suggested that the development of IT and related technologies is creating a surveillance society in the UK (The Royal Academy of Engineering (RAE) 2007). In this context, citizens are both under surveillance and part of ‘a surveillance society’ in which there are c.15 million CCTV cameras in the UK, or one for every 12 people. The Surveillance Camera Commissioner has expressed concerns over the volume of surveillance of public space:

“I encourage local citizens, opinion formers and any other interested group to engage bilaterally with their local authority if that authority is not demonstrating compliance. Public space surveillance should not only be legitimate and proportionate but its use transparent to the public” (Surveillance Camera Commissioner – Annual Report, Department of Security, 2017).

The Royal Academy of Engineering (RAE, 2007, p.149) advocated community webcams as a means of reducing state intrusion into everyday life:

“... the greatest value would be its power to prevent a Big Brother state. The authorities in Nineteen Eighty Four held absolute power, keeping the citizen a helpless subject of surveillance. The East German Stasi recruited informants secretly and derived some of their power from no-one knowing who was being watched or by whom. In contrast, making surveillance cameras accessible to the community would ensure reciprocity.”

However, as the Surveillance Commissioner (2018) confirms in his most recent report not all public and private bodies adhere to policies to protect citizens' rights. Another element of technology intrusion in everyday life of citizens and further evidence of the dark side of untrammelled deployment of technology in the name of the citizen.

CONCLUSION

This paper reveals the significance of the NPM movement in contemporary society. NPM is embedded within the UK public services (Lapsley, 2008; Hyndman and Lapsley, 2016) despite disappointing policy makers (Lapsley, 2009) the resilience of NPM as a 'multiplying machine' (Brunsson et al, 1998) spread like a virus (Hyndman and Lapsley, 2016). The NPM is not dead. The New Labour Government from 1997 to 2010 adopted the banner of Modernisation for its NPM policies. The 2008 financial collapse intensified the importance of NPM for the last decade for the Coalition Government of 2010-2015 and for the current government (Hodges and Lapsley, 2016). The attraction of NPM to Governments across the political spectrum can be attributed to the apparent certainty it offers policy makers.

However, this apparent certainty for governments creates major uncertainties for citizens. The identity of the citizen has become more complex and onerous. The dual identities of citizens are fuelled by fundamental NPM thinking and its adherence to technology as a means of transforming public services. Our perspective, based on identity as a concept and on the Foucauldian model of power in contemporary society, shows that in contemporary society, the citizen can be depicted simultaneously as a suspect and a consumer. The citizen now sits in a calculable space in which he or she makes trade-offs across different policy options based on ever expanding sources of information. The fundamental concept of the citizen as a person who exercises his or her democratic rights at the ballot box in elections has been stretched to the limit by successive waves of NPM reforms.

These observations have important implications for policy makers, public managers and researchers. In the first instance, the government policy documents over the period studied make observations about citizens which profess to enrich their lives. However, there is a lack of evidence of whether citizens feel their day to day lives have been improved by target setting cultures which are enabled by IT. This has important implications for researchers as a major research agenda to establish how citizens feel about their experiences in this rapidly changing world. Also, for policymakers, there is a certain herd instinct observable in the adoption of NPM type policies of marketisation, calculative practice as enabled by IT. But there is a case for a parliamentary investigation into the unintended consequences of these policies, the failure of intended policies because of their sheer complexity, the belief that IT is a kind of panacea for persistent problems and a lack of evidence in the design and promulgation of policy. Finally, there is an important agenda for managers of public services. Many public services are not only fundamental to the everyday lives of citizens, but also may be of considerable sensitivity. Given the continuing financial pressures on public services there is an understandable temptation on the part of hard-pressed public managers to rely on website feedback. There is a case for a more

considered approach to their assessment of the impact of NPM type, technologically delivered services to citizens. Citizens are not consumers and deserve more from public service managers.

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